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GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP - 2002

EZEKIEL - THE MAN OF SIGN

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study 1: Ezekiel among 'the good figs' - Background

Reading: Jeremiah 24

Thank you Colin, and good afternoon, brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, here we are again, another Glenlock! You know, b&s, you must think like I think, you must think, 'how many more are we going to have?' I don't know if you know it, but a couple of days ago there were 15 people blown up in the Land of Israel, there were 20 more last night. Just think of that, b&s, that's how long we've got! We've got just as long as it's going to take for Israel to survive; 20 people may not be a lot of people but I'm going to tell you, that's going to spark off an enormous reaction in that Land! and who knows what the future holds, b&s, how many more of these opportunities are we going to have? and we've got to take these opportunities and grab them with two hands. The day is going to come, when the commandment from God is going to come, 'Son of man, set thy face against Gog', and that's what this man did.

Now what we want to do during the course of this weekend together, b&s, is to consider him as a man; I hope none of you have come up here expecting an exposition of the 48 chapters of Ezekiel, because you won't get it! #1 because it wouldn't be possible in the time, #2 because I don't know, I haven't done the whole of the book. What we're going to look at, b&s, is Ezekiel the man, I want to show you what he's like, what sort of life he was asked to live, and the tremendous example that he set us, and the difficulties that Yahweh put in his way to test his resolve. It's unbelievable what God did to him, what He told him to do, and then all the possible difficulties He could make, for that man to fail that command, but he didn't! And Yahweh tested him, b&s, to the absolute limit, and we're going to see, I hope, the life of a very, very wonderful brother that will set us a tremendous example. There was one thing I think, that came through this study for me, in doing it, b&s, is that never again will I ever look at the future or the past and say, 'well, God wants me to do this and He wants me to do that; people ask me to go here and go there, and look at all these difficulties, and I can't understand it'. Well, I won't say that anymore because when you see what this fellow had to do and the difficulties that **Yahweh made Himself before that man**, never again should we ever say, 'why has this happened to me?' That man came through it all, b&s, with flying colours, a wonderful character!

It's often been said about him that he had the same title as the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, he didn't! he did not, he's called son of man, but you see, the Lord Jesus Christ was called **the Son of man**, there is a difference, as a matter of fact, the difference is enormous. However, b&s, however great the difference may have been between Ezekiel and the real Son of man, the fact that he was called son of man so repeatedly, is evidence of the fact that he was typical of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I want to sketch for you, first and foremost, that typical aspect of him. So when we see him therefore, go through these things, we'll see a reflection of the greater than he. He's called **son of man**, 93 times in that prophecy. Whereas the Lord Jesus Christ is called **the son of man** 83 times in the gospel records, so it's about comparable. So he's typical, isn't he? and we know what Psalm 80 says, 'The Son of man whom Thou strengthenest for Thyself'; whom Thou madest strong for Thyself in Psalm 80 verse 27, and 'Ezekiel' means 'whom God will strengthen' (3168), so immediately we've got him as son of man, one who God will strengthen.

We read in the early verses of Ezekiel, b&s, that he was a priest, we're told that expressly in the record, Ezekiel 1, in verse 3, 'the word of Yahweh came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest', that's interesting, isn't it? In verse 1 we're told, 'It came to pass in the 30th year', and that has to be his age, because it's not the date of the captivity, which is what you might say is the chronological stamp of his book, is the date of the captivity. It's one of the most detailed prophecies that we've got, different from Jeremiah where you don't know where you are, but here you know every time where you are. But that's not one of the dates, that's his age! So here was a priest who commenced his ministry at the age of 30. That rings a bell, doesn't it? because that's when the Lord Jesus Christ stepped into public limelight, b&s, not as a priest, but in preparation to be the great High Priest. Well, here's one that's now commencing at that age, we're told in those verses, b&s, his genealogy, and we're told in verse 3 that he's the son of Buzi, do you know what that means? it means 'he who is despised' (941). Here's a priest at the age of 30 who's father's name means 'despised', typical of the One, b&s, who came despised of men, says Isaiah the prophet, 'He was despised and we esteemed Him not', well, that's the meaning of his father's name.

His message, b&s, was going to be highly unpopular!

Turn over to chapter 2, he was going to deliver a very unpopular message, and I'm going to show you as we go on, why it was unpopular. In verse 3 of chapter 2 we read, 'And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiff hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Adonai Yahweh. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them'. That's as much as I can promise you, Ezekiel, I can promise you no more, saith Yahweh, the only thing that I can tell you is this, that whatever effect you have, and I doubt you'll have any effect whatever, the only thing you'll accomplish is the fact, that they'll be able to say later that at least we had a prophet! Now that's all that God could promise him, so he went out

with a message, b&s, heavy hearted, it was a very, very unpopular message and I want to show you that as the background of this book. This is what we're dealing with this afternoon, we're dealing with the background.

Chapter 4 tells us he was a **sign** to the people, and that's why we called our overall theme, Ezekiel a man of sign! You see in chapter 4 toward the end of verse 3, 'This shall be a sign to the house of Israel', what he was supposed to do was to be a sign to the house of Israel. So once again, b&s, we have him here as the type of the Lord Jesus Christ, **and** we read in verse 5, 'For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity', now that is clearly telling us that Ezekiel was **a representative man**, that's why he's called 'son of man'. That, b&s, is really the import of that title, that's the absolute import of it. We're going to see later on, we're going to deal with this at some length, but you know, b&s, when the Lord Jesus Christ was called **the Son of man**, it comes from Psalm 8 verse 4, and it's quoted in Hebrews 2 verses 6-8, and a great play is made upon that title, in Hebrews 2 saying, 'He also Himself likewise took part of our nature', He came in the nature of sin, the nature, b&s, which inclines to sin and everything that's abhorrent to God, a nature that goes that way; well, He came in that nature because He had to taste death **for every man**; and here's one, son of man, and I am going to lay upon you the years of their iniquity. Not very difficult, b&s, to hear the echo of Isaiah 53 verse 11, 'Yahweh hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all', that's almost the identical expression. So as we go through and see this man's suffering, he's doing that **on behalf of his people**. Not instead of them, **this is what they should be doing!** and he became a sign to them, b&s, even as the Lord Jesus Christ is a sign to us! He didn't come in our nature to show us that He could do something that we don't have to do, of course, we can't do what He did, but He came, b&s, to demonstrate **what we ought to be doing**, both in the denial of the instincts of our body and that in a positive way to show that we want to live an opposite way of life. Well, that's what they should have been doing, that's why he's called 'son of man', because upon him have I laid the years of their iniquity. What a marvellous sign it was, b&s.

We're told in chapter 1 verse 3 again, that the 'Word of Yahweh came unto Ezekiel the prophet, the son of Buzi, it came expressly unto him'. It came **expressly** unto him, well it came to the other prophets, it came to a lot of men, b&s, but to Ezekiel it came **expressly**, and Rotherham in his translation, the Emphasized Bible, capturing the spirit of the Hebrew translates that 'in very deed'. So Ezekiel didn't come around talking about what he knew because he was **dumb**, he was dumb, he had to come in very deed and do it, there was no other way, because he can't talk, God struck him down, so he's got to come in very deed, he was the Word made flesh, he was a living manifestation of his message.

You know, he was noted as a man of parables, chapter 20 and the last verse, here he makes the notation, 'Then said I, Ah, Adonai Yahweh! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?' and that's exactly what they said about the Lord Jesus Christ, 'why do you talk in parables?' We don't read of all His parables earlier on, (we're not going to deal with them in this particular camp), b&s, but Ezekiel was a man of parables, so even there we have the Lord Jesus Christ reflected in his life.

He had to eat the bible! God handed him a scroll and made him dumb, then fed him the bible. Now he wasn't entirely dumb because Yahweh said to him, 'I'm going to strike you dumb', so he couldn't just volunteer to speak, nothing would come out. But then God fed the bible to him, and said, 'when I want you to speak, I'll tell you'; so when Ezekiel actually opened his mouth, it wasn't him that was speaking at all, it was God that was speaking, and that's exactly what it says about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus did not have to be made dumb to speak God's Word only! This man did, as great as he is, he could not talk God's Word unless he was made dumb; if he had said something along the line like we do, it was more light hearted and less meaningful; Jesus never had to be struck dumb to speak always God's Word. 'My doctrine is not mine, He said, 'but Him that sent Me. The words that I speak, He said, are from my Father', and He didn't need to be made dumb to do that! But this man did, however because he was dumb and could only speak when God told him to speak, he was in another sense, the Word made flesh.

He was told in chapter 3 verse 9, that he would be resolutely resisted by false prophets. He says, 'As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house', so he had to have a hard forehead, he had to have a determination, an absolute determination to meet people who were absolutely **determined**; and it was a hard rock here, b&s, in a hard place, rock against rock, and God made him **determined** because they were determined! They were absolutely ruthlessly determined, so God says, 'you're going to be more determined than they are. The Lord Jesus Christ was like that! they came at Him from everywhere, He had an answer for all of them, b&s, He was more determined than they were!

Ezekiel saw the glory depart from the Mount of Olives and he saw it come back. That, of course, is what the Lord Jesus Christ did in actual fact, He left by the Mount of Olives, and Zechariah says, 'He'll come back the same way as He went'. Ezekiel was a living witness of that!

He was taken on by the man of brass in chapter 40, taken through the temple, and he was told in chapter 38, before that, 'Son of man, set your face against Gog', that's what the Lord Jesus Christ will do. The day will come, b&s, when a man with a greater determination than the world has ever seen, will set His face like flint, an adamant stone against Gog; well Ezekiel's told to do that!

Then finally, he went on a tour and saw the temple built before his very eyes. What a marvellous type of the Lord Jesus Christ, what a remarkable type of the Lord Jesus Christ, b&s.

Now what are we going to do, see, like all stories, every story has to hang together, you sort of have to see all the pieces, so we've got to understand where the problems were, what his commission was, how he went about doing that, what sort of opposition he

met, and why did he get the opposition? We want to be able to see that very clear, and when we do so, b&s, we'll have a greater appreciation of this man's position.

Now here is the historical background! It's a very simple one, so you shouldn't forget it! Let's come to 2 Kings 23, because it's so essential to see this in its proper perspective because this is the background to Ezekiel; it's the background to Daniel and it's the background to Jeremiah because they were all in this together. In 2 Kings 23 verses 26 and 27, this is about Josiah's reform. You know about Josiah, the young king, of course, who came full of zeal for Yahweh and executed that reform which everybody participated in with their feet and their mouth, and their **heart was miles from it!** Absolutely miles from it, to all extent appearances, 'the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh were we' said Jeremiah, they were singing this as they went up to the hill of Zion. Full of zeal and **nobody's heart was in it;** it was all a sham, b&s, and we read in 2 Kings 23 and verse 26, 'Notwithstanding Yahweh **turned not** from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal'. (The grandfather of Josiah!) 'And Yahweh said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight as I removed Israel, and I will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there', I am **determined**, says Yahweh, I can see these people, I can see them in the streets of Jerusalem, but he said to Jeremiah, '**run through the streets of it**, and find me one man, one, He says, that's genuine'. Yahweh saw through the sham, b&s, and said, they're finished! Manasseh had sealed their fate, despite this man's reformation. So the determination was coming, b&s, to put them out of His sight.

Did you know, that it was in the 18th year, Josiah reigned 31 years, but it was in the 18th year of Josiah that he effected the great reform of the Passover; that was the very year that Ezekiel was born. Ezekiel was **born** in the very year of Josiah's great Passover. So this raging reform was going on around this little baby who was not cognisant of it; but when Josiah died, Ezekiel was 13 years of age. Try and imagine it, try and imagine the impression upon a 13 year older! to hear about the death of this great king; oh, he was popular, people didn't obey him with heart, but they admired him and stood in awe of him many of them did, and there was a mourning for him, such as had never been seen in the nation. Ezekiel at the age of 13 would have witnessed one of the greatest funerals in Israel's history, that went down in the annals of Israel's history as 'the days of the mourning for Josiah', it says in Zechariah's prophecy. Jeremiah was there with the cortege weeping with the people, 'the breath of our nostrils' he said, 'the spirit of our nostrils was taken away in a blow', as Yahweh took him out of the Land, and a boy of 13 was there that day, b&s, when that funeral cortege went down there, and it went down in history as one of the greatest funerals ever. 13 years of age, very impressionable!

He would have no idea what was ahead of him, as he witnessed that great event. 23 years was to go by, b&s, before that nation was gone! It all was blown away after Josiah, in the small period of 23 years, how do we know that? It's easy, you know you

can always remember the last years of Judah's history. So you want to remember the background, well, remember it like this: 3 months, 11 years, 3 months, 11 years. Keep saying that to yourself, 3 months, 11 years, 3 months, 11 years, because you see, succeeding Josiah were 3 sons and 1 grandson. His son Jehoahaz sat on that throne for a meagre 3 months; he was followed by Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah who reigned for 11 years; he was followed by a grandson of Josiah, son of Jehoiakim, who was Jehoiachin or Jeconiah as he sometimes is called, and he reigned for 3 months. Then finally, came his last son, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, the profane, wicked prince of Israel, 'whose day is come when iniquity would have an end' and he reigned 11 years. So you have a pretty clear picture, b&s, of a chronology; so here's a boy at 13 years of age at the death of Josiah, and he's only going to be 36 when Jerusalem was swept off the earth. He would have no idea of that as he followed that funeral, if he did follow it on that day when that great man was buried. Jehoahaz - 3 months; Jehoiakim - 11 years; Jehoiachin - 3 months; Zedekiah - 11 years!

In the 4th year of Jehoiakim, Daniel was taken into captivity, Ezekiel was then 17 years of age. Did he know him? Ezekiel 14, try and get this into your mind, try and see this background, b&s, in Ezekiel 14 he was well and truly acquainted with Daniel; now Daniel went into captivity as I said, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, Ezekiel is 17 years of age; Daniel and Ezekiel would only be a couple of years apart at the most, that is in age. So in verse 14 he records here, Ezekiel says, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness'. Verse 19, 'Or if I send a pestilence into the Land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Yahweh, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness'. So he knew Daniel, b&s, as a **righteous** man; chapter 28, he knew this about him, speaking about the king of Tyre, Ezekiel was to prophesy against him in the Word of Yahweh and say, verse 3, 'behold, thou art wiser than Daniel', so he was aware, b&s, that Daniel was a righteous and a very wise man. He would have seen him go into captivity, as he was then a 17 year old boy. Let some of the 17 year old lads around here think about their lives in Australia, the way we live in this stupid country with its foolishness as if there was never a problem in the world; you know, 'the gov he's okay, she'll be right, mate!' Well, you're 17 and you're watching your fellows dragged off into captivity who are about the same age. That's the shadow under which he'd grow up as a young man. He saw that happen!

You know, there's no mention in Ezekiel's prophecy of Jeremiah, except the fact that it's **full** of Jeremiah. Absolutely full of it, and yet there's no mention of Jeremiah by name; Daniel mentions Jeremiah, he knew by books that the 70 year captivity was coming to an end and the end of his own life; he read that in the book of Jeremiah, so Daniel was very much aware of Jeremiah. We know that, Ezekiel doesn't mention Jeremiah but it's all over his prophecy. It's got to be remarkable, b&s, that we can see the correlation between Ezekiel and Jeremiah, because you see, here is the background. You've got one man in Jerusalem, Jeremiah, combatting a problem, you've got another man over in Babylon combatting **exactly, exactly the same problem!** There's a correlation

between the two of them! they're working together, and when Jeremiah wrote to the captives, there was only one segment of those captives that God said are My people. You see, there was 6, 6 different deportations by Nebuchadnezzar, 6 times he took away groups of people until finally the city was destroyed. Ezekiel went in the 3rd of those captivities, and that's **the only one** acknowledged by Yahweh as My people. Jeremiah, when he wrote to the captives, he wrote to Ezekiel who would have had to receive that letter as being their leader, because they all came and sat at his door to hear what he had to say. So later on we're going to read about Jeremiah writing a letter, that would have been written to Ezekiel, incredible!

What was the problem? What was the problem they had? Now you've got to understand this, it's so simple! here's your problem in Jeremiah 21, this was the gospel, the good news proclaimed by Jeremiah and proclaimed by Ezekiel. Here it's put in very distinct terms, b&s, here it is put so simply, you can't miss it, this is the 'gospel' message, in Jeremiah 21 verse 8 to 10, this is so essential to the whole background to Ezekiel. God said to Jeremiah, 'Say unto this people , Thus saith Yahweh, Behold, **I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.**'(now you couldn't get it clearer, could you? now what is it?) 'He that abideth in this city shall **die** by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, **he shall live**, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. For I have set My face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith Yahweh: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire'. Now you try and absorb that, b&s, you try and absorb that, b&s, the clear message of the bible had been to Israel, because they're God's people. The clear message right back in the book of Deuteronomy was that, 'I will choose Me out a place where I will put My name there'. God didn't name it in Deuteronomy 12, He just said He'd choose a place. As history unravelled and Joshua took the people into the Land, they went through the period of the judges, and to the time of the kings, there was a revelation by Almighty God in the days of David, when David took the city of Jerusalem, and called it the city of David, or the city of Zion, and **God put His name there!** That was absolutely clear to every Jew. Then pioneer after pioneer after pioneer after pioneer, came with a message, b&s, of the **glorious future of that city**. So that every heart and mind in Israel, was saturated with the good news, that one day that city would be elevated above all nations, and that Israel would be the head and not the tail, playing host to the people who would come to worship Yahweh at that temple.

That became the burning, overriding, massive desire of that people. God said to Jeremiah, go and tell them, 'I set before you the way of life and the way of death; he that stays in Jerusalem will die, and he that goes to Babylon will live'. That would almost be like telling a Christadelphian that there's such a thing as an immortal soul, because, b&s, just as strongly it had been ingrained into the minds of those people, that Jerusalem was the eternal city, just so powerfully had the negative been ingrained into them, that Babylon was the cesspool of death and iniquity; and he that stays here will die, and he that goes there will live, b&s, was one of the most unpopular messages ever delivered in the history of mankind. You would never have got a more unpopular

message than that! All the weight and evidence of the bible as they understood it, the Law and everything else was against what Jeremiah was saying. That was the message he had to take to the people.

So he went to Yahweh on one occasion in tears, and said, 'I can't go on, I cannot go on, I cannot tell them this, I just can't tell them this at all!' He could not bear to think to go out on the streets and tell people that all their traditions, all their hopes and aspirations, everything that **they** had **thought** that God Almighty had said, was the **opposite**. It nearly drove him insane, b&s, until Yahweh had to encourage him, until He made the Word a burning flame within him, which he couldn't contain; and tragically he took that message to the people, and everyone would see him as a fifth columnist. A Christadelphian who had changed his ideas! but he hadn't changed his ideas, he just knew that all that God had said about that city was **future** but the people couldn't see that, and that became the tremendous burden! It was in this context, b&s, that Ezekiel went into captivity!

I want you to come to Jeremiah 24 which was read in our hearing, about 'the good figs'. When you read this chapter, just bear in mind, Ezekiel is now 25 years of age when these words of Jeremiah were spoken. So Yahweh shows Jeremiah these two baskets of figs, and we know as bro. Mac read for us, we saw it very clear, that one basket had beautiful figs, just nicely ripe, in the prime; the other basket, ah, imagine all these insects buzzing around the mould that's forming on these things, and they're sagging down, the juice is dripping out the bottom and it smells a bit, 'naughty' they're called, awful figs, terrible figs. He sees these two figs and he's told what those figs are; verse 4 and 5, 'The word of Yahweh came unto me, saying, Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans **for their good**'. For their good, let us pause! so you remember the good figs; you have to believe that being dragged out of that place in chains, if you surrender that is, if you fell to the Babylonians and gave up and surrendered, which was the last thing that the Jews ever wanted to do, if you did against all human instincts and national pride, if you did that, then you're a good fig. What's going to happen when you get dragged away from your home and family, your background, your history, your traditions and everything you believed to be true, you're dragged off to the worst city in the world, **it's for your good!** Okay, I've got to believe that! and then you're told **it's for 70 years!** Now I'm 71, and I get told that! well, I've got to believe this is for my good, but I'm not going to live till I'm 141, I can't see the point! Nearly all of those people that could understand that message would know, b&s, that that was the end for them. There is nothing in it for them! as far as the future of this life is concerned, because their whole life and existence was bound up with Jerusalem.

How was it their good? Well, there's a wonderful set of verses in Ezekiel, there's an incredible set of verses where the goodness of what Yahweh had in mind is spelled out for them. I invite your close attention to Ezekiel 14, b&s, have a look at this. So you're in your 30's, 40's, 50's and so on and you're going for 70 years and it's for your good, how

on earth is it for your good? Well, you listen to what Ezekiel told them when they came into that land. Verse 22, 'Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. And they (that is, your children) shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith Adonai Yahweh.' Oh, so they went into captivity, b&s, and the elders of Judah came and sat at his door, after a 14 month dumb period, a dramatic event as you'll see when we get to it; he went into a trance went off and came back again, to tell them the wonderful news. The news wasn't **about their deliverance**, but the deliverance of their children! So they had to sit down and think about it, what's in this for me? Well, personally, individually, nothing! you die here! but you'll know when you see your sons and daughters what they're going to do, 'you will know that I've not done without cause all that I've done', saith Adonai Yahweh.

What happened, b&s? They saw a generation building in that land, of the good figs, not the others, but this select group of 'good figs', among them they saw, b&s, developing in that nation, young men and young girls who grew up **never, never to practice idolatry!** It took Babylon, the seat of idolatry, to get rid of it. The very seat of idolatry, it took to rid them of that curse! and they saw a younger generation of their own children growing up under their feet, upon whom that captivity was having a profound effect. They'd laid back in their chair, moms and dads, and they'd say, 'Well, dear, we didn't understand, did we? we thought, well, all our hopes are gone because we're not going to survive 70 years; but mom, I'm satisfied, what about you? and she'd say, 'Look, darling, I'm more than satisfied, it's done our children a lot of good'. You'll see, says Yahweh, that I've not done what I've done, without cause!' Would you suffer, b&s, a lifetime of depravation for your children? Some of us might, some of us might not; if we're wise, we'd all do it. If you had to go through that experience knowing that when you turned your back on that city and went away from it, that's the last time you would ever see it in this life? would you do it if you knew that it would be good for your children? You'd be a fool not to! And the good figs did it, and came to understand that that's what it was all about!

Do you know who was among those good figs? You turn to the 2nd chapter of Esther and have a listen to this in verse 5, 'Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; **Who** had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity, which had been carried away with Jeconiah (Jehoiachin - that's Ezekiel's captivity). It goes on to say, 'Who Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Haddassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful;' and Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took her for his own daughter'. Marching in those captives, b&s, is an uncle with his niece, what did she learn in Babylon? Did it do her any harm? What was his attitude? and they marched shoulder to shoulder with Ezekiel in that little group of good figs, the only one of the 6 groups that Yahweh said, 'they're the ones My eyes are upon;

that little group there'; and that little girl was in that group, didn't do her any harm, did it? She grew up, b&s, to be a wonderful little sister in the truth in Israel; a marvellous little sister! and Mordecai the wise man, wonderful hero of that book, would have instilled into that little girl the future of his people, and he would have known that he's not going back to Jerusalem ever! But he know, perhaps, one day kids like her will; that's why they went, b&s!

You know, we read in 2 Kings 24 (we won't go back to it now) but it says in Jeremiah 24 the same thing, b&s, in verse 6, it says there that among the captivity, these were a special group, God said in verse 6, that this was a very special group, He said, 'I have set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and not pluck up'. He built them, well, do you know who they were? all the builders, verse 1, the end of the verse says, 'the carpenters and the smiths', He brought all the craftsmen, He brought everyone that was constructive, b&s, and when this special little captivity of the 6, was singled out by Yahweh, He chose people that were constructive, they were constructive people. They didn't go around ripping and tearing everything to pieces, they didn't go around, b&s, smashing things up, they went around building things! Yahweh said He would build them, and He did! 1 Corinthians 3, you know what it says, don't you? about the builders, 'some build with stones and precious gems and gold and silver, and some build of wood and hay and stubble; the good material will survive the fire, the poor material won't. But God saves **all of them**, even those who come with the bundled straw and they're in the kingdom of God because they're **constructive**. But He says, 'those that destroy the temple of God, I will destroy'. This little group of people had like characters to like employment, and God's going to build the builders, and He destroyed the destroyers.

Now there was a watermark about that captivity, that everyone should have seen what it was, they were the good figs. There was a clear watermark, it was absolutely unique! and everybody should have seen what happened. Do you know what was unique about it? come and have a look at 2 Kings 24 where the history is recorded, it's absolutely unique. So the third time, Nebuchadnezzar ordered a deportation out of the Land, what happened? In verse 10, 'At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city and his servants did besiege it. (Now listen to this, this is unique) And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother (that's the wife of Jehoiakim, that's his mom) went out, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the 8th year of his reign'. He did exactly what Jeremiah said; he's the only one of the 4 who did! and all the other kings schemed to get around it, every which way to get around it; they kept saying to Jeremiah, 'come and have a talk with me, what do you reckon?' he kept saying, 'give up and you'll live, fight and you'll die'. The kings would have him come back and say, 'is there another word from Yahweh? has He said anything since? yes, He's said something else! what is it? 'give up and you'll live, fight and you'll die!' And the last thing in the world that they wanted to do was give up; Jehoiachin was the only one of the 4 that did!

Now, b&s, there's a remarkable testimony here, to the faithfulness of God, but before I show you that, look at verse 14, 'And he (Nebuchadnezzar) carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even 10,000 captives, and **all the craftsmen and smiths**: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land'. **The good figs**, so they went into captivity with Jehoiachin, now b&s, Jehoiachin was an evil man and he reigned 3 months, he **only did one thing right in his life**, he actually did what Jeremiah said; now here's the point! Having lived a life of evil, he's not commended by God at all, is God going to be a God of His word, He said if you surrender you will live? You read the next chapter, you just listen to this, 2 Kings 25, this is how faithful our God is, b&s, to an evil man, okay? he's an evil king, verse 27 it says, 'And it came to pass in the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 27th day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; spake kindly to him, set his throne above the throne of the kings that were in Babylon; changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king; a daily rate for every day all the days of his life'. **37 years later, God kept His word!** in a most remarkable fashion. That man would have probably languished in that prison, and he would have spent 37 years in that jail thinking to himself, 'why I'm an absolute idiot', perhaps, a young man with his mom, perhaps his mom gave him advice and said, 'why don't we do what Jeremiah said; why don't we take the risk? I took the risk and here I am in jail!' Then one day, the king dies, and Evil-merodach comes to the throne, and turned the lock and took him out and said, 'you're going to live a life of luxury for the rest of your life'- and he was an evil man! That's the God we serve, b&s, He's a God of His word! and that's what was unique about that captivity! One other thing, all those that went, the good figs, (the king wasn't, but he's the only king who did what he was told) took Jeremiah at his word, and the king was probably influenced by his mother, and off they went.

Now here's the scene! So there existed in Jerusalem, a group of people who said that Jeremiah is an idiot, it's not going to happen because all of our history and our destiny is different to what he's saying, he's a traitor to the truth! He's changed everything and he's gone off on a tangent, don't listen to him! Over in Babylon you've got other people of like mind who were saying, 'we're not going to be here very long', and these good figs arrive among them with a different attitude entirely. This is the attitude and the atmosphere that Ezekiel's got to work in: so what was going on in Jerusalem while these got dragged into captivity? Come to Jeremiah 28 and this sets the whole tone of Ezekiel's prophecy, what I'm telling you this afternoon, this is the whole background to it, as far as his life is concerned. So we've got false prophets in Jerusalem, Jeremiah 28 verse 1, 'And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the 4th year, in the 5th month, the Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of Yahweh in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying', so this was in the 4th year of Zedekiah, so we're 4 years on now from Jehoiachin's captivity; remember, 3 months, 11 years, 3 months, 11 years. So 3 months Jehoahaz, 11 years Jehoiakim, 3 months Jehoiachin,

11 years Zedekiah. So if it's the 4th year of Zedekiah, it's only 4 years on since Ezekiel's gone, and here's this guy called Hananiah and he's going to sprout in Israel. Verse 2, 'Thus speaketh Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within **two full years** will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Yahweh's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place, Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith Yahweh: for I will break the yolk of the king of Babylon'. In other words, Jeremiah **is a liar**; he's a **liar!** and 4 years after that 3rd captivity went in, He said, 'they'll be back here in two years.' Within 2 years, that's what they were saying in Jerusalem. What were they saying in Babylon?

Have a look at Ezekiel 11, here's what was going on in the same period of time! This was the attitude in Babylon of those people, not the good figs. You listen to what they're saying in verses 14 to 16, 'Again, the word of Yahweh came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said (Now I want you to notice who they are) **'your brethren'** (notice how this is repeated) You know, they are the whole house of Israel, wholly, in other words, these are the good figs, your brethren. Now the inhabitants of Jerusalem we're saying, Get you far from Yahweh; unto us is this land given in possession'. See the point? So he says, 'do you know what they're saying about your brethren; you know, the real Israel, the one that I love, the good figs? do you know what they're saying? They're saying to you, 'Hey, fellas, hey, do you know something? you're in captivity and we're in the city, **guess who God loves?**' and they taunted them with that! You're in Babylon, we're in God's city; guess who the real Israel is? and they taunted Ezekiel in Babylon like that! but Yahweh's to answer them, b&s, in no uncertain manner.

Chapter 13 of Ezekiel, He was warning these people, when messages came from the likes of Hananiah that there would be peace within 2 years; in chapter 13 verses 10 and 11, 'He was warning them, 'Even because they have seduced My people, saith God, saying, Peace, when there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar; Say unto them that daubed it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; with great hailstones, and it shall fall; and stormy winds shall rend it, says God.' He's not talking of the walls in Babylon, b&s, he's talking about what they're saying about the walls in Jerusalem. It's easy, isn't it, b&s, it's very easy when we all think traditionally, because we happen to belong to a family that goes back 4 or 5 generations in the truth, that **everything is going to be right** because **surelyyyy we've got to be God's people**. Well think again! God's people are those that do what He says, and what these people had done and accepted were all to the contrary of what everyone else had thought and accepted. They were going around Jerusalem saying, 'give us 2 years, we'll be back on top again; this whole city will be built again'; and they daubed it with untempered mortar, yet all the time taunting the people; 'we're in the Land and you're not, you know'; look where you are, brethren, it's where you feet are that counts, isn't it? We've got the city, **we have to**

**be the people of God!** you, Yahweh shut you out of the Land', and that would be a cruel taunt, b&s, because it had all the backing of their tradition. It would all seem to the people around them, that there might be an element of truth in that, because there were plenty of scriptures, a battery of scriptures that could be brought to bear upon the holiness of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. So it was a cruel taunt! a very difficult one to live with, especially when you knew that you were never going to go back to Jerusalem. Because if you accepted the 70 years, you were never going back, and you could never prove by your feet that you were right. You had to grit your teeth and bear it, and live with it, and watch your children grow up and to learn that **idolatry is abhorrent to God!** and be satisfied that there was nothing in it for you, but there was for your family!

That was the message, b&s. Now just as we come to a conclusion in this first study, I want to show you how Jeremiah wrote them a letter, because he knew what was going on, he knew and Ezekiel would know what was going on with Jeremiah. Jeremiah wrote these 'good figs' a letter. Jeremiah 29, he knew what was going on over there! so he's going to encouragement them in Babylon to stick to their guns. Look what he said to them, now notice to whom the letter's going to, b&s! Verse 1, 'Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders, which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon: (now notice this!) After Jeconiah or Jehoiachin the king and the queen (that's his mother) and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and **the carpenters, and the smiths**, were departed from Jerusalem.' So the letter of Jeremiah is not addressed, b&s, 'My dear brethren and sisters, all of the captivity', ah, no, that letter would have been headed up something like this: 'To my dear good figs', that's what it would have said! 'To my dear good figs'. After the captivity of Jeconiah who had gone out with his mother and surrendered, so they had done what Jeremiah had been told to tell them to do, there came a letter of encouragement, b&s, not to everybody, but to the little group of captives.

Now the fact that Ezekiel was undoubtedly their leader, because they all came and sat at his front door to hear him, shows that the letter would have been delivered to him. I don't think there's any doubt about that, he would have personally received that letter direct from Jeremiah. We're going to see, b&s, so many proof references of Ezekiel's words coming from Jeremiah, there's just a legion of them! as these two cooperated together to deal with this problem they had. So what did Jeremiah tell them to do? and it's important to know this, because you're going to see this come up later, you'll see it stand out like a lighthouse what's going to happen. Listen to what Jeremiah told them, verse 5, he said, 'Build your houses (this is in Babylon), live in them; plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them (now that means you're going to be there for a while, doesn't it? you're going to plant trees, it's going to be a fair while before you get the fruit of them). 'Take wives and beget sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughter to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters (that is, in the truth, of course) that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And **seek the peace of**

**the city'**, so here's all the Jews in Israel singing 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem', and here's all the captives in Babylon singing, 'pray for the peace of Babylon' , do you get the point? Look at the contrast and who on the surface, b&s, does it appear is right? Who on the surface appears to be right? Now we know about the future of Jerusalem, we pray for its peace; we know all God's promises will be fulfilled, and I don't want people going away from Glenlock praying for this world, for this world's sake, no way in the world, because it's going to be obliterated out of existence, but we've got to live here, b&s, this is not the time of the kingdom! Christ will determine that, in the meantime, we obey God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in, and we're told in the New Testament to pray for kings, and governors and people who rule the land, that we might live in peace. **We pray for Australia**, not because we've got any love for Australia whatever, but because we want to live a peaceful life. Here, a people were told to pray for the peace of Babylon, 'where I have caused you to be carried away captives (these are the people you have to pray for) 'pray unto Yahweh for it: because he say, for in the peace thereof that they get, shall ye have peace'.

Now that was Jeremiah's message, b&s, that in Jerusalem would be Anathema! absolute Anathema! that letter would have been when he read that, absolutely! Verses 8 and 9, 'For thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you (ah, they're in Babylon, b&s) 'don't let them deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in My name: **I have not sent them**, saith Yahweh'. So He said there are people who are dreamers, they're dreaming and there in the middle of you in Babylon; you've got them there and I've got them here, and they're pulling you down. They're dreamers! do you know who one of them was in verse 24? 'Thus shalt thou also speak unto Shemaiah the Nehelamite' (do you know what the word 'Nehelamite' means? in the margin it says it's a 'dreamer' - 5161) he was a dreamer. So this Nehelamite, this dreamer, Shemaiah the dreamer, b&s, was dreaming up, he was in Babylon and thinking, 'ah, 2 years, 2 years, and sees himself wafting back to the land of Israel, living in his abominations, thinking God took no notice of it at all, because he was holier than everybody else and because he was an Israelite and because he belonged to the city of Jerusalem, he was wafting off in his dream; **he's a dreamer, says Jeremiah, stay with the facts!** stay with the facts, and then Jeremiah mentioned what Ezekiel had meant to them, verses 10 and 11.

Verse 10, 'For thus saith Yahweh, That after 70 years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you' (now who's 'you'? it's not them, it's got to be their children) 'and will perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end'. You know, b&s, isn't it absolutely wonderful to believe in God? You know, it doesn't matter, you all have different circumstances, everyone of us have, and there are times, b&s, in personal and family life, and sometimes in ecclesial life, when we have to make difficult decisions. Not everyone is going to see the point! You think the matter through, you try to do what is right before Almighty God, you put Him first in everything, you try to, anyway! You make a decision, you may be subject to

very severe criticism, and it may be, b&s, on the surface of it, it looks pretty much that everything's against you; it's wonderful to be assured that it's right, and to lay your head on your pillow and to say to yourself, 'whatever happens I know that God means this for good'. It had to be a wonderful message!

So they came along with their taunts, 'huh, I'm in captivity with you but my friends are back in Jerusalem; and they're my friends and they're in **Jerusalem, you know! you know, in Jerusalem!** They're God's people! lovely for them to go to bed at night and say, 'I know I'm in Babylon, I know I'm praying for the peace of Babylon, I know I'm building a house here, I know my daughter's getting married next week to brother so-in-so down the road, I know that; I know it looks like I'm here permanently, but I'm not really, because I know the thoughts of God about this. I know He's thought about it, and I know that in the end, in the ultimate end, (not the end of this mortal life) but the end of all things, I'll be back there and the people in the Land won't be there! That's the confidence, b&s, that Ezekiel's ultimately able to instil into that small group of good figs there in the midst of Babylon, as Jeremiah battled on the bigger front back in Jerusalem. They cooperated together to hold that little remnant, hold them together in case they were engulfed, b&s, in all the national pride and all the national aspirations which seemed to be so right, when they knew it to be wrong! They knew their future was to put their trust and their hope in Adonai Yahweh, the mighty God.